

# THE JAPJI

OR

## GURU NANAK'S MEDITATIONS

Rendered into English and Annotated

BY

Prof. TEJA SINGH, M.A.

*Khalsa College, Amritsar*



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GURU NANAK

With his two constant companions, Bala and Mardana

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## INTRODUCTION

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I have attempted in these pages to translate and comment upon Japji, the great morning service of the Sikhs. This beautiful poem of Guru Nanak is not a hymn to be sung in accompaniment with a musical instrument. He has, therefore, affixed no tune to it, as he has done in the case of all other poems of his. Neither does it give, as does *Asa di Var*, the principal duties of man. It is rather an Essay on Man, a poetical dissertation on the fundamental principles of Sikh thought. It defines the attitude of mind in which a man has to approach the different problems of religion.

Guru Nanak saw that the real difficulty in making the people truly religious was not so much their want of religious spirit as the very peculiar turn of their mind\* with which they would take those things as *ends* in themselves which were originally intended only as *means*. When certain ends are long pursued without being clearly defined in our consciousness, as is so frequently the case in religious life, we begin to fix our attention more and more upon

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\*The learned men and astrologers read books and hold idle discussions, they do not understand anything. Corrupted by greed and other evils, they have got their minds twisted. — Sri Reg, III.

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the means, and gradually conjure them up as full-fledged ends. Thus philosophy, which had been intended to enable men to think correctly, was made into a religious practice. The visiting of holy places, which had begun in the desire that the mind might receive new strength from the vivid impressions of the glorious past, had become a regular religious institution, claiming to purify men of their sins. The simple rules of self-control had been elaborated into dogmatic systems of asceticism. The Indian minds lay enmeshed and distracted in the intricate toils of its own creation. It had to be freed and made healthy before it could comprehend the high ideals of solid virtue.

This is the task which Guru Nanak sets himself in the Jap. He exposes the futility of the mechanical forms of thought or worship, and sets us thinking for ourselves. He takes up one by one the most important questions of religious life and shows us how we should think of them. Like a true teacher, he first gives his own impressions as starting points, and then he sets us originally thinking. Take, for instance, the sixteenth stanza. He proposes to teach us what should be our attitude towards the problems of Nature. Starting with the remark that we should always be rea-



sonable, he takes the theory of the ancients that the earth was supported by a bull. First he gives his own idea as to the nature of the support underneath the earth, and then he shows the disciple how to expose the fallacy underlying the general belief about it. What the people lacked in such matters was the sense of proportion. It was inconceivable that the vast frame of the universe could get support from a puny creature like the bull. In the end he winds up the argument by saying that it is foolish to attempt to define in limited terms the measureless Strength and Beauty of God. The method is suggestive all along and the disciple is made to realize how to think about other cases of a similar kind.

The language of the composition is Punjabi, and as far as possible the words used are simple. But still the piece stands out as the most difficult part of the Sikh Scripture. There are many reasons for it. In the first place the thoughts contained in it are of the nature of meditations. They are deep and compact, and quite beyond the ordinary man's comprehension. A man must possess a ready knowledge of so many systems of thought, so many orders of religion, before he can grasp the full significance of the reasoning by which

Guru Nanak clears up the sophistries and follies of men and arrives at the real truth.

Then, the style is so compressed. It makes the piece so easy to be memorized, but on that very account the sense becomes so difficult to understand. The Guru has tried to express his ideas in the shortest compass possible. He has been so sparing of words that, like the old authors of Sanskrit sutras, he never gives a syllable more than is absolutely necessary. The Punjabi language had never before (or since) been put to such a tremendous task. Its vocabulary was very scanty, and that too had never been employed for religious or philosophical purposes. The strain was too heavy for it, and it is really a wonder how Guru Nanak was ever able to execute the work with such a fine success. Even now, with all the increased resources and facilities of expression, we dare not use our vernacular to express our thoughts half so concisely as Guru Nanak has done in his Jap.

Beside the elliptical style, there is another circumstance, perhaps the only circumstance, which has made this work of Guru Nanak so difficult to understand. From centuries it has been a custom in India to regard mere repetition of sacred hymns as a meritorious act. The practice began in the days when Sanskrit

hymns, being not recorded in writing, had to be repeated from memory. When the art of writing came, the language in which the hymns had originally been composed had already become dead. The repetition, therefore, was continued; for, it does not make much difference whether you read a text from book or repeat it from memory, when in either case your mind is not fixed on its meaning. Guru Nanak had, among other things, this superstition to combat, when he elected to compose his verses in the people's own vernacular. He taught the people to have direct communion with God in whatever language they spoke. There was to be no mystery or superstition about the sanctity of any particular language. All words that were sincere were sacred. But the people soon forgot this lesson and reverted to the old belief in the sanctity of mere words. They began to repeat mechanically the text of Japji as if it were a charm or *mantra*. Their attention was diverted from the inner meaning, and began to be fixed more and more on the outward form of words. It became a boast of godly people to complete a round of fifty-one readings of Japji every morning without caring to understand even a line of it. The result was an utter disregard for the meaning and spirit of the text, which became more

and more obscure, not because it was originally so, but because we had neglected so long to read it consciously.

Let us read it more carefully and with a more wakeful heart, and, I believe, we shall receive better comfort from it than we ever did before.



## SYNOPSIS

Guru Nanak begins with the beginning of all things. He defines God as the highest Unity, in which the Absolute and Personal are reconciled. He is the eternal Verity, but at the same time He is related to us as our Creator and Enlightener. He is so exalted in every attribute that all Reason, Meditation, and Austerities are of no avail before Him. He is to be constantly realized in a life of self-surrender. We may seek Him in Conscience, the soul-companion of man (*i*), or may feel His presence in the form of an ever-active Will, working in the world-processes (*ii*). According to our lights we may sing differently of His attributes, but we shall never come to their end. For He has no end (*iii*). One result, however, is sure. As we sing His praises our devotion would be called forth and His love would come (*iv*). There is no other way of winning His love. We cannot set up His like in images. His service, His praise is sufficient in the way of His worship. A Sikh should therefore, fill his heart with His love, and hear and sing His glories as recorded in the Holy Word. That should be his Veda and his Mantra. He need not bother himself about gods and goddesses. It should be enough for

him to know that there is a Giver of all things above and a perfect Enlightener here below (*v*). He should therefore, give up all the superstitious ideas of pilgrimage, etc., as they prevent him from exerting himself for his salvation. He should hearken to the voice of the Teacher, who is ever calling upon him to look within and see what precious gifts God has placed there—only if he knows how to set about developing them (*vi*). That would be far better than if he got incredibly long life, titles, fame, and all that (*vii*).

Then Guru Nanak actually lays down the process by which the disciple is to develop his inner nature. He dedicates four stanzas to the description of the manner in which the disciple's mental education is to proceed.

At first the Guru's teaching will create in him an interest in the wisdom of God as revealed in physical nature (*viii*). The study of physical knowledge, if followed in the right spirit, will dispel all belief in the supernatural deities like Shiva, Brahma, and Indra, that are supposed, according to the Smritis and Shastras, to be working behind the natural forces. He will come to realize the true relation between Matter and Mind (*ix*). Next he will develop in him the knowledge of what is true, temperate, and good; and thus by looking con-

stantly at the true proportion of things he will come to acquire a steady vision of life (*x*). At last he will become sensible of the highest qualities of manhood. It will be easy for him to see how a man should behave in different spheres of public life; what is expected of him as a leader of men in church or state (*xi*).

But all this while, as his mind grew in the knowledge of different things, he might not have got anything substantial in his character. For this purpose something more than mere instruction is required. It is implicit obedience to the Will Divine that the Guru next lays emphasis on. The process, however, of inner change in consequence of this self-surrender is so subtle that the Guru checks himself before giving any definite description (*xii*).

The first consequence of self-dedication to divine purposes is that all the senses of the disciple's soul receive an awakening; and, avoiding all the ways that lead to death, he picks out one that leads to righteousness (*xiii*). Then there is no faltering on the path of Duty. Religion becomes an inevitable and binding force (*xiv*). As he advances more and more in spiritual experience he does not think of his own salvation alone, but feels it incumbent on him to save others as well (*xv*).

His education is complete and he has become a Representative Man, a standard personality, by which other men in the world might guide themselves. He is approved and honoured in the court of God and, on account of his knowledge and experience, stands beautiful in the councils of kings. Whatever he says is reasonable. Being conscious of his own limitations, he will never commit himself to any definite measure of the Beauty and Power of God. His only guide in life is the constant thought of His presence. To him that must be good which is pleasing to the Lord (*xvi*).

All failures in religion have been the result of not recognizing this principle. People have set up the letter of the law above the spirit. Hundreds of people may be seen repeating mantras mechanically, practicing austerities or meditations, discussing philosophical enigmas (*xvii*), while all the time sin and suffering go on unrestricted. What is the reason, then, that in spite of so many forms of worship, so many heroes of iron frame, the people still remain as sinful and helpless as ever? The simple reason is that they forget the truth that whatever pleases Him is good and whatever is repugnant to Him is evil. The people's leaders, taking a narrow view of life,



have fixed upon five or seven or some other definite number of actions as sinful or virtuous (*xviii*). The result is that the people have become slaves of the letter of the law. Even God to them is governed by particular names. He might not reply to them, if addressed by a different name. They forget that by the exigencies of expression we may be forced to speak of Him in definite terms, but He does not favour any one name or any one place above another. Whatever is, is the manifestation of His Name. He resides everywhere (*xix*).

If, therefore, a man wants to proceed towards perfection and wash himself clean of sins, let him not trifle with the terms 'virtuous' and 'vicious,' but actively practice the love of His Name (*xx*). Pilgrimages, austerities, almsgiving, and mechanical charities are of no avail. Loyalty of the heart to the cause of God is wanted. This loyalty is to be ever-active, for 'there can be no worship without good actions.' But in all cases the disciple is to refer himself to God, and ascribe even all his virtues to Him. He can satisfy all our intellectual, aesthetic, and moral cravings. For He is Truth, Beauty, and the eternal yearning of the heart after Goodness. All questions of creation and the date of its beginning



are also to be referred, in a humble spirit, to the greatness of God, who Himself is what are received as the creative agencies like Maya, the primal Word, and Brahma. He alone knows when the world was made. We can only say that the Master is great and great is His manifestation (*xxi*).

This feeling about 'God's greatness' is the true basis of our love for him. The Guru, therefore, in the next five stanzas tries to bring before us the different manifestations of God's greatness. First, he shows this greatness manifested in the hugeness of His physical creation. Wherever we look we see worlds upon worlds rolling in an immense space of which nobody has ever found a limit (*xxii*) and (*xxiii*). After giving a telescopic vision of the immensity of God's works, the Guru directs us to give a microscopic attention to the abundance of things—the sights and sounds—found in this vast frame of creation (*xxiv*). Then he mentions the different gifts of God which reveal His greatness not as a Creator but as a Giver whose bounty knows no bounds. Here too the Guru proceeds in a very methodical manner from lower to higher kinds of gifts: first the ordinary gifts of worldly comfort, which come to the evil as well as the good, to the foolish as well

as the wise; then other gifts, such as Pain and Hunger, which are more difficult to be taken in the light of blessings; and then Liberty which is the most precious among the worldly gifts bestowed on man, but whose consciousness comes very late in a nation's life. Last of all he mentions a gift which though secular at the basis is yet in its upper reaches a quality of truly moral kind. It is the gift of Thankfulness. It gives man something more than liberty: it makes him a king of kings (*xxv*). Then the Guru shows the greatness of God as revealed in the invaluable moral gifts bestowed on man. Look at the gift of Love. How precious is it! And then take other virtues based upon the moral law, whose distinctions God has revealed to us through a wonderful subconsciousness. When we do not come to His standards, how wonderfully His mercy comes into operation to save us! Is He not immeasurably great? Who can adequately describe His greatness? None! He alone knows how great He is (*xxvi*).

The Guru now adopts a direct method of bringing before us a vision of God's greatness. His verse rises to a most sublime pitch when he tries to bring before our imagination the wonderful orders of beings, who stand praising and singing at the gate of

Heaven. He reminds us, in a way, that there is no creature that can reach His glorious divinity. All are mortal beside Him. All are liable to change. He alone is eternally the same (*xxvii*). Led by the idea that God has been changing His orders in different times, people have set up different sects, as those of Yogis (*xxviii*), (*xxix*), Shaivas, and Vaishnavas (*xxx*). God's arrangements, however, were made only once, and they endure for ever. He never changes His dispensation (*xxxi*).

According to this scheme of salvation man has to realize step by step the Name or the presence of the Lord, until he becomes one with Him. Throughout this progress one has to keep in mind that, though it is the inherent upward tendency of the soul that we have to work with, yet nothing could be really effected without His Grace. Therefore, all dispensations, which are not based upon His grace, are false (*xxxii*). We must only pray for guidance and not try to force it, because by force we can obtain nothing (*xxxiii*).

Now the Guru lays down a specific course of character-development, by which a man may rise step by step to the highest stage of manhood. The religious consciousness, on its first awakening, comes in contact with the out-

ward appearances of Nature visible immediately around us. At this stage man cannot see anything beyond the physical phenomena except the laws of cause and effect working everywhere. The principles of life drawn from this observation are, therefore, strictly moral. As far as man can see for himself, he finds that it is all right with those who do good, and it is not all well with those who do evil. He works with a sense of duty, and is said to be living in the domain of Law (*xxxiv*).

From mere Observation man comes to Reason. As the field of observation extends he begins to see that there are more worlds than this in the universe, and that there have been countless generations of men living before him on this earth. His interest in his surroundings becomes reflective or historical. He realizes his position in the creation, and comes to see a unity, a kinship, established between him and Nature, between him and the past history of mankind. The sense of loneliness is gone, and he revels in this new consciousness. Virtue has acquired another attraction for him. He must do good, because others beside him and before him have found reason in doing good (*xxxv*).

He has found a cause. But the mere intellectual understanding of it will not rouse



his sympathies, unless he so exerts his faculties that virtue enters into his disposition and he does good because he is habitually drawn towards it. The next stage, therefore, is that of Self-Exertion, in which man works intuitively, by the very attraction of virtue. His sympathies are called forth by the mere sight of suffering or injustice. The more he feels, the more he learns how to employ the different faculties of his mind and soul. In this way all his senses are properly moulded and made ready for action (*xxxvi*).

All the foregoing training was meant as a preparation for the domain of Action. All the forces of good in man have been organized, and he has become a hero, a God-inspired hero whom nothing can daunt or deceive, for he is filled with God. He has given himself away to the Infinite, and is brimming with His abundance. He feels the same joy that fills him running through all the universe. His soul has been perfectly attuned with the True One, and his actions are in perfect keeping with His Will. He has become an inhabitant of the region of Truth, where God Himself dwells (*xxxvii*).

The Guru winds up the whole thing by saying that the life of religion is a life of discipline. The development of character, as de-



tailed in the last four stanzas, is to be worked out in the different spheres of life within the world. The acquisition of virtues, such as Purity, Patience, Love, Commonsense, etc., is not such a simple thing as the singing of a song or the repetition of a text thousand times a day. These virtues have to be hammered out in our dealings with men, with constant suffering and sacrifice (*xxxviii*).

In the last *shlok*, which is given by way of an epilogue, the Guru gives the purpose of human life. We are placed here as children playing in the lap of Nature, and our sojourn here is made as comfortable as circumstances would permit, but that is not the whole thing. Our doings are being watched over by the Supreme Judge. The end of all our actions is to please Him. Those who succeed in doing so get a seat in His loved presence, and those who do not are cast far away.

## **TRANSLATION**

*By the grace of the One Supreme Being, of the  
true Name, the Creator, devoid of fear  
and enmity, Immortal, Unborn  
Self-existent, and the  
Enlightener.*

## THE MEDITATIONS

God was true in the beginning, before all  
ages began;  
He is true even now, and shall be for ever  
more.

### I.

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By thinking I cannot think Him out, even  
though I were to think a hundred thou-  
sand times.

Nor will the enquiry ever cease by remaining  
silent, even though I were to sit in medita-  
tion long and deep.

The hunger after God will not be appeased  
even by Ambition, though I obtain a load  
of worlds.

And of the countless cunning devices not one  
will prevail in the end.

Then, how shall we justify ourselves? How  
shall the veil of falsehood be rent?

Nanak, by walking according to the Ordain-  
er's Will, which is engraved in our being.

## II.

By the same Will all forms come into being.—  
The workings of that Will cannot be described.  
It is by that Will that the forms develop life  
in them, and then they grow exalted,  
Until some become good and others evil, and  
receive pain and pleasure accordingly.

By that Will some are brought under Grace,  
and others are doomed for ever to go the  
round of transmigration.

All are subject to the Supreme Will, none  
outside its pale.

Nanak, if this be rightly understood, no one  
would assert the independence of his self.

## III.

Some sing His Power, for they enjoy this  
gift.

Some hymn His bounties, taking them as His  
signs.

Some sing His goodness, and some His beautiful  
mercies.

Some sing with learning hard to understand.

Some sing that He creates our bodies and then  
reduces them to dust.

Some sing that He deprives us our life and  
then gives it back again.

Some sing of Him as if He were far away  
from sight.

While others sing that He sees and is present  
everywhere.

There is no end of His description, nor of those  
who describe.

Millions upon millions of men have tried, but  
have failed.

Even His bounties are so great that the Giver  
gives on but the receivers grow weary of  
receiving.

And it is not only now, but through ages and  
ages that man has been living on His  
bounty.

The Ordainer continues this process by His  
Will,

And, free from care, O Nanak, He feels happy  
in being so employed.

#### IV.

We have heard that the Master is true and is  
manifested in Truth; that infinite are the  
ways in which He is described;

And that when creatures pray to Him for  
gifts,

He the Giver gives.

Well, then, what shall we offer to Him in re-  
turn that we may behold His council-  
chamber?



What shall we utter with our lips, which may  
move Him to give us His love?

In the ambrosial hours of the morn meditate  
on the grace of the true Name.

For, your good actions may procure for you  
a better birth, but salvation is from Grace  
alone.

Nanak, this will show that the True One is all  
in all Himself.

## V.

He cannot be made and set up as an image;  
For, He is all in all Himself, devoid of mate-  
rial conditions.

Whosoever serves Him is honourable.

Nanak, let us, therefore, sing of Him, for  
He is full of all excellences.

Let us sing and hear His praises and keep  
them lovingly in our hearts.

We shall thus be freed from pain, and our  
hearts will be filled with joy.

To us the Guru's Word is the voice of Yoga,  
and the Word is the Veda, for it is in-  
spired by the spirit of God.

God is Shiva; God is Vishnu and Brahma;  
God is Parbati and Lakshmi.

Even if I knew Him, I could not describe  
Him; for

He cannot be described in human words.

My Teacher has, however, convinced me of one thing:

That there is but one Benefactor of all creatures; may I never forget Him.

## VI.

I would bathe at sacred places, if by so doing I could please Him; otherwise, what is the use of bathing?

How can I please Him by merely bathing, when in the whole wide world that I see created nothing can be got without exertion?

There, in the mine of my soul, there are so many precious gems and jewels of faculties waiting for development,—only if I hearken to the voice of the Teacher.

The Guru has convinced me of one thing:

That there is but one Benefactor of all creatures, may I never forget Him.

## VII.

If a man's life were four ages long, or even ten times longer;

If he were known in all the nine continents of the world, and all the men therein followed him in procession;

If he were to win a name for himself and get the praise and honour of the world;

He would still be of no account whatever, if  
he did not find grace in the eyes of God.  
He would be accounted, rather, as the meanest  
of worms,  
And even criminals would have a fling at him.  
Yet, Nanak, (God is so merciful) that He re-  
forms the hearts of those who are not vir-  
tuous, and adds to the virtues of those  
who are.  
But there is none to be seen among men who  
could do any good to Him in return.

#### VIII.

By hearkening to the voice of the Teacher the  
disciple is enabled to know what the Sid-  
has, Pirs, and Sur-Naths are.  
He comes to know the real nature of the earth,  
its supporting bull, the skies,  
The islands, the spheres, and the underworlds.  
Death loses its terrors for those who hear the  
Word.  
Nanak, to the devotees this knowledge is al-  
ways refreshing.  
It gives them mind enough to defeat all sor-  
row and sin.

#### IX.

Next this instruction will make the disciple  
realize the true significance of the powers

represented by Shiva, Brahma, and Indra;

And he will begin to dislike the offering of praise to them.

He will come to know the secrets of physical Nature and the unifying Spirit working behind;

And in the light of that knowledge he will be able to correct his views about the Shastras, Smritis, and Vedas.

Nanak, to the devotees this knowledge is always refreshing.

It gives them mind enough to defeat all sorrow and sin.

## X.

By this instruction the disciple will obtain the sense of Truth, Harmony, and Goodness;

Which will be as good to him as bathing at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.

And the study of which will minister to his honour.

He will thus acquire a steady vision of life.

Nanak, to the devotees this knowledge is always refreshing.

It gives them mind enough to defeat all sorrow and sin.

## XI.

While listening to the Teacher the disciple  
goes over the cardinal virtues of man-  
hood:

He learns what might be expected of him as a  
religious leader or a king;

So that with his help even the blindest men  
could find the way;

And he would be able to solve the deepest prob-  
lems of life.

Nanak, to the devotees this knowledge is al-  
ways refreshing.

It gives them mind enough to defeat all sor-  
row and sin.

## XII.

No one can tell what Practice does effect, the  
practice of the Word.

He who tries to say has always to repent  
afterwards.

No paper, no pen would serve the purpose;  
there are no writers,

Who could sit down and thrash out the ques-  
tion.

Such is the Word immaculate!

O, if one knew how to obey it with all the  
heart and soul!



### XIII.

By acting on the Guru's word the mind awakes  
to higher consciousness, and right reason  
comes.

With it the disciple's knowledge extends to  
all the spheres of life;

And he does not receive blows in the face,

For, he does not seek the way of Death.

Such is the Word immaculate!

O, if one knew how to obey it with all the  
heart and soul!

### XIV.

When a man is thus trained by Practice,  
there is nothing that can obstruct him in  
the way.

He goes openly and with honour.

And does not walk astray into by-lanes;

For, the practice of the Word has found for  
him a relationship with Duty.

Such is the Word immaculate!

O, if one knew how to obey it with all the  
heart and soul!

### XV.

The way of obedience brings him at last to  
the door of salvation.

First he becomes the spiritual support of his  
family;  
Then as a teacher, who has saved himself, he  
also saves his followers.  
Nanak, the man who obeys the Word shall not  
wander begging from door to door.  
Such is the Word immaculate!  
O, if one knew how to obey it with all the  
heart and soul!

## XVI.

Such men are approved as Representative  
Men and become master spirits.  
They get honour in the court of God.  
And look beautiful in the council of kings.  
Their only guide in life is the constant thought  
of God.  
In whatever they say they try to be reason-  
able.  
They will know that there is no count of God's  
works.  
The fabled Bull is really Law, born of Mercy,  
Which in a spirit of harmony is supporting  
the whole system.  
To justify oneself one must understand  
How great is the load that the Bull must bear!  
There are other worlds beside this earth, and  
beyond them still others;

And all this load on one Bull! What is the  
power that supports the Bull itself?  
The names of creatures of different species  
and colours  
Have been recorded by an ever-flowing Pen.  
Who can write the account of them?  
And if written, how great must be the ac-  
count!  
How great His Power and His Beauty  
And His Gifts! Who could know the meas-  
ure thereof?  
By His one word the whole universe sprang  
into existence.  
It was by that word that thousands of rivers  
began to flow.  
What power have I to describe Thee?  
I cannot even sufficiently admire Thee.  
Whatever is pleasing unto Thee is the only  
good.  
Thou alone endurest for ever, O Formless One.

## XVII.

Countless repetitions of sacred texts are going  
on, and there are countless ways of de-  
votion.  
Countless are the kinds of worship and aus-  
terities.  
There are countless men who read from books

and countless those who recite the Vedas  
from memory.

There are countless men engaged in Yog,  
whose hearts are indifferent to the world.

There are countless religious men who are dis-  
cussing moral and philosophical points.

There are countless men who bear charity in  
their hearts, and countless those who give  
alms.

There are countless heroes who boldly face the  
steel.

And countless are the mute worshippers who  
practice concentration of the mind.

What power have I to describe Thee!

I cannot even sufficiently admire Thee!

Whatever is pleasing unto Thee is the only  
good.

Thou alone endurest for ever, O Formless One.

## XVIII.

And yet amongst us there are countless pur-  
blind fools;

Countless thieves and dishonest men;

Countless those who come and rule over us  
with an iron rod;

And those who murder the innocent,

And committing crimes depart from hence;

There are countless liars who wander in the  
mazes of falsehood;

And malicious men who eat filth;  
And slanderers who carry the load of calumny  
on their heads:

Thus reasons lowly Nanak.

I cannot sufficiently admire Thee.

Whatever is pleasing unto Thee is the only  
good.

Thou alone endurest for ever, O Formless One.

### XIX.

Countless are His Names and countless His  
abodes;

Countless His regions which are beyond all  
reach.

Even to say countless is to commit oneself.

No doubt, it is by means of words we utter  
His Name and give Him praise;

And by means of words we reason, and sing,  
and discuss virtues;

It is in words we write and speak;

And by words we interpret our relation with  
Him;—

But there are no words that bind the Recorder  
of these relations Himself,

Who ordains what people receive.

Whatever is, is the manifestation of His  
Name.

There is no place where the Name is not.

What power have I to describe Thee?



I cannot even sufficiently admire Thee.  
Whatever is pleasing unto Thee is the only  
good.  
Thou alone endurest for ever, O Formless  
One.

## XX.

As when a hand or foot or any other part of  
the body is soiled,  
The dirt is removed by washing it with water;  
As when one's clothes get polluted,  
They are made clean by applying soap;  
So, if the mind be defiled by sin,  
It can be cleansed by the love of the Name.  
'Virtuous' and 'vicious' are not mere terms  
for talk.  
Whatever one does one carries its record  
along.  
The man who sows must himself eat the fruit,  
And come and go as He wills.

## XXI.

Pilgrimages, austerities, special acts of mercy,  
almsgiving, and religious gifts are all dis-  
pensed with,  
When one gets even a grain of the honour of  
His Name.  
We should hear it, obey it, and love it in  
our hearts,

And thus wash away our sins at the sacred  
fount within us.

We should pray, All virtues are Thine, O  
Lord; none mine.

There can be no worship without good actions.  
All hail to Him, who is Himself Maya, the  
Primal Word, and Brahma;

Who is Himself Truth, Beauty, and the  
eternal yearning of the heart after Good.

What was the time according to the Hindu  
or the Muslim computation, what the lun-  
ar and the solar day,

What the season and the month, when this  
frame of the universe was erected?

The Pandits have not discovered the time,  
even if there be a Puranic record about  
it;

Nor is it found by the Qazis who write the  
Quranic texts.

No Yogi knows the date; none knows the sea-  
son and the month.

The Creator alone knows when the world was  
made.

How shall I address or praise Thee, O Lord?  
How shall I know Thee, or describe?

Nanak, everybody, thinking himself wiser  
than others, speaks of God;

But I cannot say more than this: that the great

Master's manifestation is great, and whatever is accomplished proceeds from Him. He who ascribes any achievement to himself will not look beautiful in the world to come.

## XXII.

There are worlds beyond, worlds below and innumerable worlds above.  
We have grown weary of finding their limit:  
this is what the Vedas say.  
And the Western Books put it at eighteen thousand; but that, too, in reality comes to the same thing.  
The count could be given, if there were a count.  
Men have only perished in the attempt.  
Nanak, let us only say: He is great. How great,  
He alone knows.

## XXIII.

Praisers praise Him, but they are unable to know the measure of His greatness,  
As rivers and tributaries fall into the ocean,  
but know not its extent.  
Even emperors whose dominions are as vast as the ocean and who possess mountains of wealth,

Are not equal to the ant which in its heart does  
not forget its Lord.

#### XXIV.

Exhaustless are His praises and the ways of  
their singing.

There is no end of His works and His Gifts,  
And the sights and sounds in His creation.

We cannot discover what informs His pur-  
poses.

We cannot know even the extent of His crea-  
tion,

Which seems to be boundless.

How many have been distressing themselves  
to find out His limit!

But the limit cannot be found.

No man has ever found it.

The more we say the more it grows.

Great is the Lord, of eminent domain;

His Name is most exalted.

One must be as high as He Himself

To know how high He is.

He alone knows His greatness.

We only know, Nanak, that it is through His  
grace,

His kindness that we receive all gifts.

#### XXV.

His benevolence is great beyond description.

He is the greatest benefactor of mankind, and  
yet in return He does not covet anything  
in the least for Himself.

Many redoubtable warriors beg at His door,  
And many others whose number cannot be con-  
ceived.

Many of them who receive gifts only wreck  
themselves with self-indulgence;  
And many get His bounties and yet deny the  
Giver.

How many fools have been and are being fed  
by Him!

There are many who are ever afflicted with  
pain and hunger:

Even these, O bountiful Giver, are Thy bless-  
ings.

Liberation from bondage depends upon His  
will.

Nobody else has anything to do with it.

If, however, anybody be so foolish as to pre-  
sume anything in the matter,

He alone shall know what blows one has to face  
for it.

God Himself knows our wants and gives ac-  
cordingly.

Alas! how few acknowledge this.

He, whom God grants a thankful heart that  
praises Him,

O Nanak, is a king of kings.



## XXVI.

Priceless are the virtues and priceless the dealing in them.

Precious are the lives of those who deal in virtue and keep by them its precious stores.

Precious are its customers, too, who come and go for it.

We cannot set any value on love and those who are absorbed in it.

Priceless are His laws and their administration;

Priceless His weights and His measures.

Invaluable is His forgiveness and the mark of His acceptance.

Invaluable are His mercies and His commands.

Everything of His is invaluable and baffles description.

Those who have tried to describe have invariably grown silent in the end.

The Vedic texts and the Puranas speak of Him,

And the learned men who discourse on them.

The Brahmas and the Indras,

The Milkmaids and the Krishnas,

The Shivas and the Sidhas,

And the several Buddhas made by God, all speak of Him.

The giants and the gods,

The demi-gods and seers, all speak of Him.  
Some are discoursing, and others are about to  
begin,  
While many depart before their talk is done.  
Were God to create as many more as He has  
already done,  
They would not even then be able to speak of  
Him adequately.  
God can be as great as He pleases;  
And, Nanak, the True One Himself knows how  
great He is.  
If there be any man so impious as to say he  
knows, he should be put down as the most  
foolish of men.

## XXVII.

How beautiful is Thy gate; how beautiful thy  
mansion, where Thou sittest to watch over  
all!  
How many minstrels are there with countless  
instruments of different kinds!  
How many musicians who sing in various  
tunes and different measures!  
The elements of water, wind, and fire hold a  
serenade at Thy gate, and there is the  
King of Death singing to Thy glory.  
To Thee sing Chit-Gupts, the scribes of hea-  
ven, on whose record the Dharmraj weighs  
the deeds of men.

To Thee sing Ishwar, Brahma, and the Spouse  
of Vishnu, all beautified by Thee alone.

To Thee sing Indras on their thrones with the  
choirs of heavenly throng.

The Sidhas in meditation sing Thee and the  
saints in their discourses.

The celibates, the zealots, and those whose  
religion is patience sing Thee, as also do  
the unflinching heroes.

To Thee sing the great Rishis with the Vedas  
of different ages, and the Pandits who  
read them.

To thee sing the beauties that enchant the  
hearts in heaven, on earth, and in the  
nether regions.

To Thee sing the jewels, created by Thee, and  
the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.

To Thee the mighty warriors and the brave;  
to Thee sing the four sources of life.

To Thee sing earthly regions, the heavenly  
spheres, and the whole universe, created  
and sustained by Thee.

To Thee sing those who please Thee and are  
steeped in Thy bliss-imparting love.

Many others, too, sing Thee; but their names I  
do not remember. What more can I say  
of them?

He, He alone remains ever the same, the true  
Master of the true Name.

He who erected this frame exists, and, even though the whole creation depart, He shall endure for ever.

He who made Nature, consisting of things of different colours, orders, and species, Watches over His handiwork according to His own great purposes.

He does just what pleases Him, and none can say what He should do.

He is the King of Kings, Nanak, and ours is only to live according to His will.

## XXVII.

Make Contentment thy ear-rings, and Self-exertion thy begging bowl and wallet. Instead of rubbing ashes on thy body, keep the thought of God always in thy mind.

The idea that thou hast to die should be thy gaberdine; and thy rule of life should be to keep thy body pure like a chaste virgin. Let Faith be thy staff.

Thou shalt belong to the Ayee order of saints, if thou associate thyself with all men as thy equals; and thou shalt conquer the world, if thou subdue thy mind.

All hail to Him! All Hail!

The Primal Being, who is pure, who never began, who never dies, and through all ages remains the same.

## XXIX.

Let Knowledge of the good be thy food, Compassion thy steward and Divinity ringing in every beat of the heart be thy horn.

The desire to possess supernatural powers is merely an irrelevant taste: own Him as thy Lord, who keeps everything strung on His will.

The principles of Union and Disunion regulate our conduct, and we get what He ordains.

All hail to Him! All hail!

The Primal Being, who is pure, who never began, who never dies, and through all ages remains the same.

## XXX.

It is generally supposed that the Divine Mother by a mysterious scheme conceived and gave birth to three deities:

One that creates, the second that supports, and the third that adjudges destruction.

But in reality it is God, who directs the world according to His will, and no other.

The thing that astonishes the people most is that, while He sees them, they cannot see Him.

All hail to Him! All hail!

The Primal Being, who is pure, who never be-



gan, who never dies, and through all ages remains the same.

### XXXI.

God has His seat, in every region, and wherever He is He has His stores with Him.

He put in once for all whatever He had to place in them.

The Creator Himself creates and Himself watches over His creation.

Nanak, the arrangements of the True One endure for ever.

All hail to Him! All hail!

The Primal Being, who is pure, who never began, who never dies. and through all ages remains the same.

### XXXII.

Had I a hundred thousand tongues instead of one, nay, if twenty times as many,

I would still call upon the Name of the One Lord hundred thousand times with each tongue.

In this path, leading to the house of the Bridegroom, there are steps which we have to mount until we become one with Him.

By hearing the news of Heaven, even the worms are stirred with a longing to be there.

Nanak, Heaven is found through the grace of  
God; and all other boasted ways and  
means are false.

### XXXIII.

For, of ourselves we have no power to speak  
or to keep silent;  
No power to ask or give;  
No power to die or live;  
And cannot of ourselves command kingdoms  
or live in blatant prosperity.  
We cannot force an awakening in our spirit,  
whereby to think and reason correctly.  
We have no power to find the way of freedom  
for our souls.  
He whom the power belongs does everything:  
Nanak, no one can of himself be high or low.

### XXXIV.

There are nights and days, lunar as well as  
solar, and seasons;  
There are elements of water, air, and fire; and  
there are lower regions.  
In the midst of them God has established, as  
the abode of Duty, this earth,  
With so many living beings of different forms  
and habits,  
Of different names and kinds.  
They shall be judged according to their deeds

By Him who is true and whose court is just.  
There the model men of approved character  
look beautiful.  
And those who win His favour get the mark of  
His acceptance.  
It is determined in *that* court who is raw and  
who is ripe.  
Nanak, we can know this only when we get  
there.

### XXXV.

This is what supports man as long as he is in  
the domain of Law.  
Now I want to show what he meets in the field  
of Reason.  
He sees there many elements of water, air, and  
fire ; many Shivas and Krishnas ;  
Many Brahmas, fashioning beings of various  
colours and forms.  
He finds there many fields of action, golden  
mountains, and many Dhruvas receiving  
instruction.  
Many Indras, moons and suns ; many stellar  
and earthly regions ;  
Many Sidhas, Buddhas, Naths ; many god-  
desses and their counterfeits ;  
Many gods and demons, many sages, and  
many precious products of the seas ;

Many species of life and forms of speech; and  
many lines of kings.

There are many men of spirit there, and many  
who are engaged in the service of man-  
kind. There is, Nanak, no end of them.

### XXXVI.

In the domain of Reason knowledge is resplen-  
dent;

And there are million kinds of joy, born of  
sights and sounds.

In the next stage, that of Self-exertion, the de-  
velopment of character expresses itself in  
the formation of disposition.

The moulding done there is most beautiful,

And none can describe its effect:

If any one tries, he is baffled in his attempts.

There the spiritual insight, understanding,  
and reasoning faculties are moulded.

And the feelings of the godly and the spiritual-  
ly-minded men are disciplined.

### XXXVII.

The domain of Action is characterized by en-  
ergy.

In it there are found none else

But the heroes mighty and brave,

Who are brimming with the spirit of God.

There are also throngs of Sitas, rapt in glory,

Whose beauty is beyond the reach of words.  
Neither death nor guile can affect them,  
Whose hearts enshrine the Lord.  
In the same region of Action there are found  
communities of holy men,  
Who, keeping the Lord in their hearts, rejoice  
for ever.  
At last man reaches the region of Truth, where  
God Himself dwells  
And looks on His handiwork with His joy-  
raining eye.  
There are in it spheres, systems, universes,  
Of which no words could describe the limit,  
And in which there are worlds upon worlds of  
creatures,  
All engaged in doing what He ordains.  
Man looks on all this and rejoices in its con-  
templation.  
But, Nanak, it is hard to describe what he sees.

### XXXVIII.

The Ideal at the true Mint is coined thus :—  
Patience the smith works in Chastity's forge;  
With the fire of Suffering and the bellows of  
God's Fear  
He melts the immortal nature in the melting-  
pot of Love;  
And on the anvil of Common-sense he ham-



mers it out with the hammer of the Divine Word.

Only those work at their lives in this way, who are visited by Grace.

Nanak, when God sends grace, with one glance of His He fills man with everlasting joy.

### SHLOK

Water is the father, great earth the mother,  
and the air inspires our clay.

Day and night are the nurses, male and female,  
in whose lap the whole world is playing.

Our deeds, good and bad, shall be read out in  
the presence of the Supreme Judge.

According to their own actions, some shall get  
a place just near Him, while others shall  
be thrown far away.

Those who kept the Name always in their  
hearts, their toil shall be over,

And their faces shall reflect glory. Nanak, in  
their company many others, too, shall be  
saved.

## NOTES

## NOTES

(In a quotation cited the number given in *Roman Capitals* refers to the *Guru* to whom it belongs and that in small type indicates the portion from which it is taken.)

BY THE GRACE OF THE ONE SUPREME BEING, etc. This formula is given in full before all the main portions, named after the different musical measures, of the Holy Granth. It is also given, in a condensed form, as an invocation to God before each and every distinct passage in the Book.

The final word *parsadi* does not mean *grace* but *by the grace*, and is therefore not given as an attribute of God. Where it means *grace*, it does not have *siari* with the last letter.

## THE MEDITATIONS

Almost all annotators have taken *Jap* to mean *meditate* or *repeat*; but, if we look through the Holy Granth, we will find that the word in this form is always used as a noun, and that when it is intended as a verb imperative, it must have a *siari* before the *pappa*. Besides, it is marked off with full-stops before and after. Hence the word *Jap* is translated

here as *meditations*, and is given as the heading of the text.

## I.

In the opening *shlok*, with which the *Japji* really begins, God is defined as being *true*, and therefore man also, in order to realize Him, has to rend the veil of falsehood and be *true* like Him. This process is traced in the whole *Japji* until man becomes at one with Him in the Region of Truth (*xxxvii*).

1. Some suppose that as we cannot think out God with our intellect, there is no such being as God. It is the old fallacy of the Sorites, who would fain question the existence of a heap of corn on the ground that none could determine how many ears would have to be removed before it ceased to be a heap.

Then, there are others who hold that we cannot think at all of God: we can only feel about Him. But feeling and devotion, too, must involve a kind of knowledge however implicit, otherwise they would become blind impulses merely. It is impossible to think of the worship of an unknowable Absolute unrelated to human thought. We cannot be inspired with the feelings of respect, awe, and devotion by a Being whom we cannot realize to any extent. The Guru's meaning is that, though we can

know something of God, it is impossible to know all. Philosophy is not the way of salvation.

3. Some, like Mahmud Ghaznavi, in order to win religious merit in the eyes of Khali-fa, gave full swing to their earth-hunger and tried to bring country after country under Islamic rule.

6. There is in us an irrepressible instinct, called 'eternal yearning of the heart after Good' (*xxi.8*), which points to the presence of Divinity, call it conscience or what you will. Cf. *Gauri*, V:—

Remember God who is engraved in  
thy soul and in thy body; Evil  
shall avail thee nothing."

As will appear from this line as well as the stanzas *ii* and *v*, the Will of God is revealed in three places: in the conscience of man (individual); in the evolution of mankind (society); and in the Guru's Word (scripture). The life of man is like a cavalry march. We have to make rapid decisions in the face of moral crisis. When evil attacks us it never gives us time to consult moral guides or books. We have to decide quickly and alone. For this purpose God has provided us with conscience as a First-Aid.



## II.

True knowledge traces the presence and the organic movement of Divinity in the human mind (*i.6*), and in the progressive advancement of the world. In this stanza God's Will is the energy of life and growth, and is shown to be revealed in the evolution of human nature and destiny from the beginning: how God's Will brought about forms, which by the long travail of ages developed organized life in them; how this march of evolution, continuing perhaps for millions of years, culminated in Man. Then came manifestation in man of the powers of progressive intellect and belief, until there appeared in him soul powers of truth and goodness. As a responsible being he became conscious of higher and lower tendencies in him, which brought to him pain or pleasure according to the nature of his actions. They also determined his destiny. If he followed his better tendencies, he was able to win God's pleasure; and if he gave loose to his evil tendencies, he was thrown into the round of transmigration.

Inanimate nature, animal life, and human consciousness are expressions of the same ever-active Will and stages of the same mysterious development. God is not sitting away

from His creation and directing it from outside. His Will is working everywhere: "The ever-active Will is operating everywhere in all the forms of the lower, middle, and upper regions."—*Maru, III.*

"Thus He dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man—the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life; whose attributes had here and there  
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,  
Asking to be combined; dim fragments meant  
To be united in some wondrous whole,  
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,  
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,  
Some point where all those scattered rays  
    should meet  
Convergent in the faculties of man."

*Browning.*

1. When the Guru thinks deeply of the wonder-working WILL of the Lord, an intense feeling of admiration overtakes him. At such moments the contemplation of his subject transcends all limits of hard and fast lines of understanding, and the expression of his thoughts assumes insensibly a negative form. See also *xii* and *xxiv*.

3. In this verse the Guru wants to emphasize that the ultimate source of all that is

in us is God alone. Without Him there is no strength in us. Nobody, not even the evil man, can say that he can do anything independent of God. Everything moves within the Providential domain:

Thou art a river in which all beings move:  
There is none but Thee around them.  
All living things are playing within Thee.  
—*Rahiras, IV.*

The fish may run against the current of the river or along with it, just as it likes, but it cannot escape the river itself. Similarly man may run counter to what is received as good or moral, but he can never escape from the pale of God's Will.

Then, who is responsible for his actions? Man himself. We learn from the first *sklok* of *Asa di Var's* seventh *pauri* that man is given free will, which leads him to do good or evil actions, to think of good or evil thoughts, and to go, in consequence, to Heaven or Hell.

“Governed by his free will he laughs or weeps;  
Of his free will he begrimes or washes himself;  
Of his free will he degrades himself from the  
human order;  
Of his free will he befools himself or becomes  
wise.”

In the next *sklok* we read:

“Self-assertion gives man his individuality and leads him to action:

It also ties him down to the world and sends him on a round of births and deaths.

Wherefrom comes this assertion of self? How shall it leave us?

It comes to man from the Will of God and determines his conduct according to his antecedents.

It is a great disease; but its remedy also lies within itself.

When God sends grace to man, he begins to obey the call of his Guru.

Nanak says: Hear ye all, this is the way to cure the disease.”

The source of evil is not Satan, Ahrman, or any other external agency. It is our own sense of Ego placed by God in us. It may prove a boon or curse to us, according as we subject ourselves to God's Will or not. It is the overweening sense of self that grows as a barrier between God and man and keeps him wandering from sin to sin—

“The bride and the bridegroom live together, with a partition of Ego between them.”—*Malar, IV.*

The Infinite is within us, ‘engraved in our



being,' like a cypher which is gradually unfolding its meaning as we listen to the voice of the Teacher. It is like the light of the sun ever-present, but shut out of our sight by the cloud of ignorance and selfishness. We sin as long as this light remains unmanifested and we believe in ourself as everything to us.

Regeneration comes when, at the call of Grace, we begin to subject our tiny self to the highest Self, that is God, and our own will is gradually attuned to His Supreme Will, until we feel and move just as He wishes us to feel and move.

Why did God give us this Ego or the freedom of will, which leads us often to sin? It is a great boon, for it is through this freedom that the cultivation and ultimate perfection of human character is possible. It is the only condition of progress. Had there been no choice of good or evil left to man, he would have been a mere automaton and his life would have been an unprogressive blank. It would have been impossible for him to acquire the glorious development of character, which seems to be the greatest purpose of god's creation (*ii, viii-xvi, xxxiv-xxxviii*).

We cherish this freedom as we cherish any other kind of social freedom in the world. Is not the municipal liberty a boon? And yet



what is municipal liberty? Is it not the freedom to manage our city affairs rightly or wrongly as we please? We know that if the management had been in the hands of Government, the sweeping and lighting work would have been done more efficiently. But still we think it is a great boon to enjoy this right of making mistakes. Because it is through this liberty that we can develop our sense of responsibility and perfect our national character. Just as, in spite of our freedom in carrying on the municipal affairs, the supreme government is the source and strength of our actions, similarly, in spite of allowing us free will to a great extent in our affairs, God can be said to be the ultimate source of all that we do.

### III.

God is said to be residing in the heart of man and in the works of nature. But none can realize Him fully, though people in making this attempt have given us some partial views of His presence. He has infinite qualities and each quality is inexhaustible. Take His bounty. Men have been living on His gifts ever since the world began and still the store is there unexhausted.

1. Those people who are powerful and brave emphasize the strong qualities of God.

4. As the Vedantists who reason about the Brahm in a most abstruse manner.

5. As the Mohammedans, Christians, etc.

6. As those who believe in the transmigration of souls.

The first two verses summarize what has been said so far.

1. The first part of this verse refers to the introductory lines of the Japji, and the second part refers to the first ten verses of the last stanza.

2. See the eleventh verse of the last stanza.

5. Another rendering will be: "Make an offering of your time immortalized, and by way of utterance, you should speak of the grace of His true Name."

Time immortalized: every good action on our part presses the signet of eternity on the fleeting moments of our life.

## V.

God is to be worshipped, not in the likeness of an image set up in a temple, but in the heart of man that is full of love. There is no particular priestly class to be approached for this purpose. Anybody can love and serve the Lord and be his own priest. The way is simple. Instead of pouring over antique books

or mumbling mantras, let the disciple attach himself to one God, learn what the Teacher says, and then go directly to practice. This is to be his worship, this his service.

## VI.

“Without pleasing God all actions are worthless.

Repetition of mantras, austerities, set ways of living, or deeds of merit leave us destitute even before our journey ends.

You won't get even half a copper for your fasts and special programmes of life.

These things, brother, won't do there: for the requirements of that way are quite different.

You won't get a place there for all your bathing and wandering in different places.

These means are useless: they cannot satisfy the conditions of that world.

Are you a reciter of all the four Vedas?

There is no room for you there.

With all your correct reading, if you don't understand one thing that matters, you only bother yourself:

I say, Nanak, if you *exert* yourself in action, you will be saved.

Serve your God and remember Him, leaving all your pride of self.” — *Gauri Mala, V.*

It is ridiculous to think that the pleasing of God is such an easy thing as bathing at certain places. We must work for it. We must undergo a discipline of life in the hands of the Teacher, and cultivate our faculties according to his teaching to the best advantage possible. This course of discipline is detailed in stanzas *viii-xv*.

3. Cf. *Gauri ki Var*, IV: "The whole of this body is sacred, if the light of the True One shines in it. There are mysterious gems hidden therein, which can be dug out by one who wants to serve according to the instruction of the Guru."

## VII.

Miraculous powers are no signs of spirituality. If we did nothing to please God we would be nothing but mean, even though we performed all the miracles found in the legendary books. Guru Nanak himself, when asked by Yogis to perform a miracle, had replied that he had nothing but the true Word and Good Company to depend on in his mission. (*Bhai Gurdas*, *Var i*. 42-43).

7. It is a matter of great satisfaction that, though men are sinful, God has not left them utterly helpless. He has provided suf-

ficient means for their regeneration. Cf. *Var Majh, I*:

“There are false coins and there are true;  
He Himself is the tester.

He puts the true ones in His treasury and  
throws out those that are false.

The spurious ones being rejected at the  
true Court, where should they turn for  
redress?

They should take to the true Enlightener.  
He will remind them into true ones by  
ministering to them His redeeming  
Word.”

## VIII.

The first effect of the true teaching on the disciple is that he begins to see through the unsound views spread by the Yogis about the physical world around him. This is the most natural beginning of a man's education. For most of our religious errors, involving so much sin and suffering, proceed from our superstitious beliefs about our physical surroundings. It is right, therefore, that the disciple's religious education should include a working knowledge of facts about Nature. And it should astonish nobody. For our knowledge of natural as of moral truth is a real participation in the wisdom of God, which



measures and determines His Will. People have come to regard Science (the knowledge of God's creation) as distinct from Divine knowledge. But if rightly interpreted, Science is a part of God's infinite wisdom and Scripture an index to that wisdom revealed in the mind of man and the workings of Nature.

1. SIDHAS, PIRS AND SUR-NATHS, different kinds of ascetics who were notorious for claiming super-natural powers. They held that by practising certain mental and physical juggleries men could float in the air, shake the foundations of the earth, force the skies to send rain, and perform hundred other tricks which went directly against the ordinary principles of geography.

2. ITS SUPPORTING BULL.—See *xvi.* 7.

4. Because the Guru's teaching has removed their superstition, which is the real cause of the fear of death: "They entertain no fear of death, whose minds are free from superstition" (*Gauri*, V).

## IX.

Why had the people personified the destructive, productive, and sustaining powers of Nature into deities like Shiva, Brahma, and Indra? Because they could not see the spiritual power that was working behind these

forces (xxx.4) They could not establish any relation between the physical phenomena and the organizing mind of God, without supposing something palpable between, that they could easily think and speak of. The disciple having learnt of the true connection between Matter and Mind, will at once give up his belief in gods and goddesses, and will acknowledge that God Himself through His well-organised laws is working everywhere.

## X.

Now the disciple enters the moral sphere. The Guru gives here the three representative virtues: Truth, Harmony, and Goodness, as opposed to *Sato* (Peace), *Rajo* (Desire), and *Tamo* (Passion). The sense of Truth will teach the disciple how to distinguish what is essential, significant, and true from what is non-essential, trivial, and false. The sense of Good will enable him to see what is moral and best fitted for the fulfilment of God's purposes. And the sense of Harmony will teach him how to co-ordinate the things of the soul with those of the body, the things that concern the world beyond. He will acquire such a balance, such a singleness of mind that he will never wander in search after salvation in pilgrimages, etc. He will feel most honoured

in the knowledge that he possesses such a mind. For, what greater satisfaction of ambition can there be than the possession of a balanced outlook of life?

## XI.

So far the Guru had inculcated qualities of individual character; now he gives those which belong to public life.

2. A RELIGIOUS LEADER OR A KING: the words in the original are Sheikh, Pir, Patshah. Patshah and Pir are purely secular and spiritual leaders respectively; while Sheikh combines in himself the functions of both.

## XIII.

The simile used in this and the next two stanzas is of a traveler who suddenly awakes to where he is and what surrounds him. Being acquainted by his guide with the nature of the regions through which several roads pass, he selects one road for himself and pricks on openly and fearlessly, undaunted by the sloughs and pitfalls lying in the way, until he reaches his destined goal. Having once travelled himself he brings his family and his friends with him to the same long-sought haven of rest.

It should be noted in connection with

these stanzas that they refer to the development of man's whole character, as affected by the practice of virtue, whereas the stanzas before them (*viii-xi*) refer only to the growth of his mind under the influence of the Guru's instruction.

1. Cf. *xxxvi*. 7. The work of a virtuous man is never dull. It enlightens the mind and opens the soul to higher things. No matter what kind of work you are engaged in, if it is honest according to Guru's teaching and is intelligently followed, it will give you enough matter for thought and will teach you wisdom and philosophy of life as no number of books could teach. Light will come to you even where you are, only if you keep your hearts open and work for it conscientiously.

2. Virtue practised in any one sphere of life does not keep our knowledge confined to that sphere alone. If we are intelligent and look about all the different sides of our work, we will come to learn something about other spheres of life also.

## XV.

As in the eleventh stanza, so here the Guru takes up the public career of the disciple.

## XVI.

1. The word *Panch* means one of the five representatives of a village or community. By constant association with the representative system this number came to have a special sanctity attached to it. Bhai Gurdas says: "One disciple is a single Sikh; two form a holy gathering; but where there are five, there is God Himself." It was on the same account that in the scheme of Guru Gobind Singh five tried Sikhs were invested with all executive authority.

REPRESENTATIVE MEN: These words convey the idea that such men are the best representatives of the people, raised above the crowd not because God has appointed them as His representatives, His elect, but because they have worked themselves up with the same material and the same chances as other people around them, and have acquired commanding personalities. They are not avatars working as men; for, then, their ideals would be beyond our capabilities. They are, rather, men of the world working themselves into god-like beings, and serving as practical examples to the rest of mankind.

3. The Guru shows here what is the real sphere of action for a Representative Man.



He is not to run away to the forest and nurse his individual soul there. But he has to work in the councils of men to help the kings in the conduct of national affairs.

4. This shows their practical nature. They have found, as given in the fourteenth stanza, a relationship with duty. Thought and action have been so developed in them that they do not feel any need for reference to an external authority. As soon as they are called upon to do a thing, they are impulsively led by the constant consciousness of God to do that which is right. This is the true practice of the presence of God.

7, 8. The Hindus believed that the earth was supported by a bull underneath it. The Guru wants to show that this myth was founded upon a misconception of God's power as manifested in His creation. It was through lack of the sense of proportion that the people supposed a puny creature like the bull to be supporting the vast framework of Nature. Really it was Law, which God in His infinite mercy has established to keep everything in its proper place and let it perform its proper function for the smooth working of the whole system.

14. *I. e.*, are infinite in their variety of description.

17. Cf. *Jap Sahib*, 159: "Wonderful is His beauty and measureless His power."

## XVII.

This and the next stanza are to be taken together.

In the preceding stanza the Guru had shown what wrong notions about God's power resulted from a narrow calculating spirit which made a fetish of the letter of the law. Now he wants to show the evil effects of the same spirit working in the social, moral and political domains. Look at India, he says. In a country where there was so much reading and devotion, so much discussion and philosophising, it would be natural to expect a widespread knowledge and enlightenment; but what do we find here instead?—nothing but folly and ignorance! In a country which is the home of renunciation, where there have been so many examples of men who, in a spirit of indifference to the world, have spurned away empires and have adopted a fakir's garb instead, where there is so much charity and alms-giving that thousands of idle men live in comfort at the expense of those who can hardly support themselves, —in such a country there should be no temptation for greed or dishonesty. But here we find so many

thieves and dishonest men! Where there are so many brave men, with unmatched skill in arms, with heroic traditions extending over thousands of years, there should be no question of defending the hearths and homes against national oppression. But what do we find in our history? Our weakness has tempted foreign invaders to come again and again; and after murdering the innocent and perpetrating all kinds of outrages on our women and children they have settled down to rule over us with an iron rod. They in their turn have been ousted by others equally bad. But we have rarely been able to strike an effective blow in self-defence. Again, where in order to purify their thoughts so many are engaged in practising concentration of the mind, there should be rare cases of mental perversion. But in actual practice we find no end of lying, muck-raking and indulging in filthy thoughts.

The reason is that the people had made religious and military practices as ends in themselves. They should have considered that the only aim and object of our life is to please our God, and all our thoughts and actions should be dedicated to that end. Without keeping this in view, whatever we do shall end in waste and hollowness. If, on the other hand, we take the fulfilment of God's will as our

ideal; then we shall develop ourselves as the soldiers of God, as described in stanza *xxxvii*.

### XVIII.

7. A man who talks evil of another eats filth. Cf. *Gujri, IV*:

“That worldling, the slanderer, by talking of another washes his dirt and eats filth.”

9. The Guru has been talking of sinners, and, in order to avoid the impression of self-righteousness, he calls himself lowly. Just the same epithet occurs in *Gauri Guareri, I* and *Sri Rag, I*.

### XIX.

Following the letter of the law, men had come to think that only particular names belonged to God, as Allah, Ram, Hari, Govind, Jehovah, etc. A man who believed in Allah could not bring himself to think that the same Allah might as well be called Hari or Govind. Guru Nanak and his successors made current among their followers all the different names which had been used for God by the different contending parties. Guru Arjun says in *Rag Bhairo*: “The same who is Gosain is also my Allah.” And then at the end of the same piece: “We are neither Hindus nor Mussalmans. We



have only dedicated our bodies and souls to Allah-Ram.”

There was another mistake in the popular belief which the Guru corrects here. He says that there are countless names of God—not only one thousand, or ninety-nine, or three. And He can be addressed by any name in Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, or even Hindu or Panjabi. No particular language is sacred. All words which are honest and loving are holy and worthy of respect. There is no one language that pleases Him more than another. All are equally good to Him. It is true we have to use particular words in order to express ourselves. We cannot do without them, as our language, written or spoken, is wholly composed of words. When we praise God or take His name, we have to use such definite epithets as Ram, Hari, Allah, etc. When we reason, or sing, or discuss things about Him; when we describe our relation with Him, and say what we are to Him or what He is to us, we have to use particular language in which certain fixed terms are used. But God in reality is governed by no names. In fact the whole creation is His name, because it serves to express Him to us. Wherever we go we find Him revealed. There is no particular spot, like Hardwar or Mecca, more sacred to Him than any



other. His holy presence is spread over all the earth and heavens.

4. The word 'Name' in the Sikh Scriptures is often used for God himself, as in *Sukhmani*, xvi. 5:

"The Name sustains the animal life. The Name supports the parts and the whole of the universe."

And Kabir's *Bibhas Prabhati*, 2: "According to the Hindus the Name resides in an image."

Also *Jaitsri*, IV. 5:

"I thank my true Guru who revealed to me the Name that was hidden."

But "God as He *is* can never be fully known" (*Gauri Bawan Akhari* of Kabir), for "one must be as high as He Himself to know how high He is" (xxiv. 13-14).

Therefore it is clear that all that we can know about God is only a partial view of Him. So in Sikh Scriptures the word 'Name' also means God as revealed. Cf. *Asa di Var*, ii. 2:

"His glory is great, because His Name is great."

Wherever He is manifested, there is His Name. According to the 10th line of this stanza, the whole creation reflects His Name. But it is also revealed in the Scripture. Cf. *Maru*,

III: "The Guru's Word has spread in the world. From it we can know the Name."

Also *Bilawal*, III: "The true Name is known from the true Word."

Therefore the third meaning of the word 'Name' is the Guru's Word as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Cf. *Maru*, III:

"What the Guru says is the immortalizing Word. Read it night and day as the Name of God." In Guru Arjun's *Sukhmani* the piece itself is called 'the divine knowledge, the praise of God, and the Name' (xxiv. 5); and the Name is identified with the Word of the Guru. In many other places the same attributes are given to the Word as to the Name. See *Sri Rag*, III, *Ghar* 1, *Ashtpadi* 5.

This Name is to be sung, uttered, thought upon, served and worshipped.

So wherever the word 'Name' occurs it must mean either God Himself, or God as revealed, or the Guru's Word.

8. Cf. Guru Arjun's *Gauri Bawan Akhri*, 54:

"The whole universe sustained by God is within the scope of words.  
By going through words we read the Veds,  
And the Shastras, Smritis, and Purans.  
Through words we sing and talk and hold discourses.

Through words we find the way to free ourselves from fears and doubts.

Through words we distinguish between religious and worldly acts, and mark the pure religion.

All that we see is within the bound of words.

But the Supreme Being, O Nanak, is beyond their limit."

See also Kabir's *Gauri Purbi Bawan Akhri*.

## XX.

Before tackling the problem of sin it was necessary to remove two misconceptions: one, that sin did not exist at all; and, second, that somebody else could undertake to suffer its consequences for us.

7, 8. Good and evil are stern facts, and by no Vedantic hocus-pocus can we get rid of our individual responsibility for what we do. We must carry with us the impressions of our deeds wherever we go, and get our future determined by them.

9. There is no vicarious responsibility. Each man must himself bear the consequences of his deeds. Cf. *Asa. V*: "Nobody shall be prosecuted for another."

## XXI.

6. Guru Nanak says in *Majh*: "We can-

not get to heaven by mere talk. We must *practise* righteousness, if we want salvation." A man of God must always be active, always doing good, as God is ever-active. A false behalf prevails amongst us that when a man becomes one with God, all his activities cease, and he remains constantly absorbed in the contemplation of bliss. This is wholly wrong and mischievous. It springs from a misconception about the nature of God. God's people, who are to be so many images of God, can be inactive only if He be wholly inactive. But is He so?

"God is in evidence by His servant's side: Wherever His servant has to work, God goes hastening to his aid."

The progress of man in spirituality, according to Sikhism, means that he begins to practise the virtues of God and gradually all pride, selfishness, and littleness leave him, until he becomes most active in the doing of good.

Psychologically too the passive receiving of religious impressions without any reaction in activity is dangerous. If day after day we go on listening to enthusiastic appeals from the pulpit without trying to act upon them, our devotional exercises will only make us the more unfeeling. If we continuously nourish



sentiments without producing active morals, we degenerate into the sentimental.

7. According to some the world was created through Maya or Prakriti. They say that God the Absolute, out of sudden emotion of creative joy, cut Himself up in two parts: Ishwara and Maya, or Purusha and Prakriti. And it was with the help of Maya the divine Mother that Ishwara was able to create and develop the universe. But Guru Nanak emphasizes the unity of God and draws away our attention from the other supposed agencies of creation.

There are others who believe that it was through a prolonged sound of OM or a creative fiat like *Kunn* that the world was made. According to Guru Nanak, however, it was God Himself who made the world, and He Himself was the Word.

Similarly it was not Brahma but God Himself who created all living things.

8. The Guru gives another reason why man should be loyal to God and look to no other source for his intellectual, moral, and aesthetic satisfaction. Man's nature is a compound of intellect, emotion, and will, and each one of these specialized modes of his personality must be satisfied before we can expect complete conviction from him. God the Su-



preme Ideal, therefore, in order to satisfy his intellect, sentiment, and will, appears as perfect Truth, perfect Beauty, and perfect Good. Guru Gobind Singh says in his *Jap*, 151: "God is the Master Mind, the light of Beauty, and the perfect Goodness."

All Philosophy, all Art, and all Religion, into which man's threefold personality expresses itself, will be best realized when their aim is to express man's yearning for God as the highest ideal of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

14. The Gurus in no place commit themselves to any definite date or manner of creation. The Tenth Guru says in the *Chaupai* included in the *Rahiras*.

"Men according to the degree of their understanding  
Describe Thee differently, O Lord.  
But no one knows the extent of Thy creation,  
Nor the way in which Thou first created  
the world."

17, 18. Here, too, our loyalty to God is shown to be the secret of all achievement.

## XXII.

3. WESTERN BOOKS: the word in the original is *Kiteban*, which in the Sikh Scriptures

is used for the books of Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians.

EIGHTEEN THOUSAND: Cf. *Gauri Bhagat Kahna*: "Brother, there are eighteen thousand worlds."

Also *Tilang Namdev*: "I see Thee one in *so many thousands* of worlds."

## XXVI.

1. VIRTUES, which God has made us capable of.

7. His forgiveness is exercised towards sinners, while those who have fulfilled His Will receive the mark of His acceptance.

8. In this verse God's Mercy and Justice are referred to.

25. IMPIOUS: the word *bol-vigar* in the original is a compound word, meaning one who talks disparagingly.

## XXVII.

In the 21st stanza God was shown to be an Ideal Personality, satisfying all our intellectual, moral and aesthetic ideals. In the 22nd, 23rd and 24th stanzas His greatness was shown to be supreme and convincing from the intellectual side; in the 25th and 26th from the moral side; and now in this stanza he tries to strike our imagination by presenting to it a

picture of a great Durbar in which the grandest personalities of the heaven and earth are shown to be bending in awe before the Supreme Personality of God. This is the last and most effective way of bringing home to us the greatness of God.

6. *et seg.* These verses show that there is no equal of God. All beings beside Him are His creation and are paying homage to Him. Cf. *Maru Solhe, I.*, 14:

“Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva stand serving at the gate of the Inscrutable. There are many others who are painfully labouring at that gate, whom I cannot count.”

Also *Ramkali ki Var, III*:

“The Pundits and Astrologers do not understand the matter: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva were created to obey His Will.”

10. It was supposed that each of the four ages was governed by its own Veda. See Guru Nanak's 2nd Shlok before the 13th stanza of *Asa di Var*.

13. The four sources or springs of life are: the egg, the sperm, the sweat, and the seed. See *Aitriya Upanishad, iii.* 3 and *Manu, i.* 43-46.

## XXVIII.

The ear-rings, the wallet, the ashes, the patched gaberdine, and the staff were the symbols of Yogis. In their places only those things are mentioned in which the Yogis were particularly lacking.

1. SELF-EXERTION THY BEGGING BOWL AND WALLET: instead of begging it would be more honourable for the Yogi to exert himself and work in some honest occupation.

INSTEAD OF RUBBING ASHES, etc: ashes were rubbed on the body in order not to let its cares interfere in the engagements of the spirit. But the same purpose would be better served if the Yogi made it his practice to feel the presence of the Lord.

2. GABERDINE, a loose-flowing coat worn by a Yogi to show as if he walked about in his own shroud. But when the heart is awake to the idea of death, there is no need of wearing a shroud in life.

3. THE AYEE ORDER, a sect among the Yogis, which is chiefly noted for toleration. The meaning is: Let the tolerance taught by the Ayee-panthies be utilized in looking upon all men as your equals. Do not leave the company of men, but come and live with them. Cf.

*Ramkali, III*: "O Yogi, it is no yoga to leave thy family and wander away from home."

SUBDUE THY MIND: we are not to kill our natural desires or mental energies, but to turn them into healthy channels. Cf. *Maru ki Var, III*:

"The waves of the mind are stormy: how shall  
I save myself in the presence of God, my  
Master?

By steeping thyself deeply in the true love of  
the Boundless.

Nanak, through the kindness of the Guru, thou  
shalt save thyself if thou attach thy heart  
to Truth."

Pessimism has always been exhorting us that, to free ourselves from the curse of life, we should leave the struggle for existence. It takes refuge in the extirpation of all desire. But the true Guru knew the great worth of human hopes and desires. They were to be conquered and controlled and not extinguished.

"It is for the mind to apply itself to mind: What gain is it to kill the mind itself?"  
—Kabir's *Gauri*.

5. Unlike the God of many other religions, who has been changing His forms with the passing of time and whose law is supposed to have been different in different ages. Sometimes *Jnana* or knowledge was supreme,



and at other times *Bhakti* or Love. But according to the Sikh Gurus, "Whoever was saved in the ancient or the modern times, it was through love and devotion of the Lord."—*Sarang, V.*

## XXIX.

1. HORN, which a Yogi carries with him to announce himself wherever he goes. He also blows upon it when he is going to take his food.

2. Self-surrender is higher than the powers of Sidhas or masters of occult sciences; for the latter denote a desire for independence from God's law.

3. THE PRINCIPLES OF UNION AND DIS-UNION: all things are strung on God's will and man among them. As long as man is conscious of this, he lives and moves in union with Him. But gradually led away by the overweening sense of self he cuts himself away from that unity and begins to wander in moral isolation. It is, however, so designed in the case of man that whenever he wishes he can come back to the bosom of his Father and God and resume his position there. Guru Nanak says in *Rag Maru*:

"By the force of Union we meet God and enjoy Him even with this body;

And by the force of Disunion we break away from Him.

But, Nanak, it is possible to be united again."

When we come into this world, we begin our life with a certain capital. We inherit our body from our parents, and there are divine things in us, as 'the spirit and progressive tendencies,' which serve as the forces of Union and keep us united with God. But there are also evil tendencies in us inherited from our past life, which serve as the forces of Disunion and draw us away from Him towards moral death. Cf. Guru Nanak in *Maru*:

"Man earns his body from the union of his mother and father;

And the Creator inscribes his being with the gifts of the spirit and progressive tendencies.

But led away by Maya he forgets himself."

But, thank God, it is possible for him to recover and be himself again:—

"From being reduced to the position of a baser metal he can be turned into gold again, if he meets the Guru."—*Maru, I.*

### XXX.

2. That is, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

4. That is why people have set up deities like Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva, who satisfy none of the attributes laid down about God in the last line of this stanza.

6. THE PRIMAL BEING: God existed before anything was. See *Sukhmani*, *xxi*. Some hold, on the other hand, that Matter and Soul are co-eternal with God, as in *Rig Veda*, *i*, 164.20:

“Two co-eternal spirits reside in the equally eternal matter, like two co-eval and friendly birds perching on the same tree. One of these two (*viz.*, the finite soul) tastes of the fruit of this tree (*i.e.*, feels pleasure and pain which are incidental to the soul’s union with matter, or its circumscription with a body); while the other (*viz.*, Infinite Soul or God) simply watches or supervises without eating of the fruit (*i.e.*, he rules the world without being subject to its joys and sorrows).”

They say that it is difficult to predicate of God, before He created this universe or after He will have destroyed it, those attributes which we commonly affirm of Him. How could He be called a Creator before He had created anything—or Just or Merciful?

The answer is that these qualities belong to God in relation to us His creatures. It is impossible for us to know His other attributes.

Beside, the Vedists believe that before this cosmos there was a chaos, and before that chaos a cosmos, and so on. Then what are we to predicate of God when there is a chaos?

### XXXI.

1. His presence in every region is in itself a store-house. There is no need of a Vishnu as the general supplier.

3. God Himself is the creator, not Brahma; and Himself the preserver, not Vishnu.

### XXXII.

1, 2. The Guru has just before condemned the belief in a Trinity. He says, for himself he would praise the one Lord even though he possessed tongues without number.

3. The ideal is to believe in one God and to conduct oneself in such a way as to ultimately become one with Him. It is not a quick business. Bhai Gurdas says in *Var xxviii*. 1: "That which is called the path of Sikhism cannot be traversed in a single step." It is a long course, as detailed in stanzas *xxxiv-xxxvii*. Bhai Gurdas in another place, while laying down the ideal of Sikhism, compares the process to a bride's mounting up a ladder to reach her high-placed bridegroom. See *Var xi*. 5.

4. However humble may we be, there is no reason for despair. For—

“There lies in the centre of each man’s heart

A longing and love for the Good and Pure.”

The news of Heaven are in themselves so attractive that even the most sinful are drawn upwards by them.

### XXXIII.

4. BLATANT PROSPERITY: literally, prosperity that creates tumult in the mind.

### XXXIV.

The Guru in these last four stanzas lays down the steps referred to in line 3 of the 32nd stanza: *i.e.*, the actual process by which a man may perfect his character. He does not indulge in mere didactic, visionary or mystical doctrines. He does not talk so much of freeing the soul as of making it worth freeing. *Being*, not *becoming*, is the question.

In moral life we cannot conceive a beginner making a start in virtuous life at once. There is some time during which discipline of knowledge is necessary. At first man’s view does not extend beyond the observation of



physical appearances just around him. He sees that night is invariably followed by day and summer by winter. He feels by experience that, if we put our hand into fire, it will burn; and when we dip it into water it becomes wet. The sequence of cause and effect is complete and apparently admits of no variation. The principle of conduct deduced from this observation is strictly moral. Those who do good shall fare well in the end, and those who do evil shall be adequately punished by a just God. The disciple at this stage does not concern himself with metaphysical problems. He does not care to know what lies on the other side of this life. He contents himself by saying that there will be time enough to know these things when he gets to heaven. In the meantime he must confine himself to the discharge of his duties in the present world.

### XXXV.

Next as his observation extends and his reasoning faculties develop he begins to see that beside our earth there are many suns and moons hanging in the firmament, and beside human beings there are many species of life and many forms of speech. He looks before and after and finds that before him there were many men like Dhruva and Buddha working

for the same end, that is, to cultivate their spirit and serve humanity. With this reflection he redoubles his energy in doing good, not because virtue has become a habit with him but because he feels that the doing of good must be right, as others beside and before him had thought so.

3, 4. The reference is to the productive, destructive, and conservative forces in Nature.

5. DHURVA, even as a child, had received religious instruction from Narad and had gone to the forest to meditate on God. He was an example of firm determination, and was rewarded for that virtue with the position of the Pole star.

7. THEIR COUNTERFEITS: those virgins who are supposed to be inspired by the goddess Durga, and are worshipped as such.

### XXXVII.

5. SITAS: holy women, as pure and active as Sita. From this verse it is clear that the ideal of action is equally high for women as for men. Both are to reach the same height of character, though perhaps in different ways.

### XXXVIII.

1. Cf. "That man has hammered out his

character at the true mint, who has practised service according to the Guru's behests."—*Bhairo*, IV.

3. SUFFERING: Cf. Bhai Gurdas, *Var xxviii*. 10:—"The law of Sikhism is patience and quaffing of love and suffering the insufferable."

### SHLOK.

This shlok, with two small variations, occurs also among the writings of Guru Angad in *Var Majh*.

The same functions of Nature are described, almost in the same words, in Guru Nanak's *Maru Solhe*, i. 10. See also Bhai Gurdas, *Var ii*. 19 and *vi*. 5.

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## SOME REVIEWS

ON

**The Japji or Guru Nanak's Meditations**

AND

**The Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism**

BY

Professor TEJA SINGH, M. A.  
of the Khalsa College, Amritsar.

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The two little books by Professor Teja Singh are welcome as from a Sikh thinker. Both are very readable and give an excellent idea of what the Sikh faith is at its root. The translation of the Japji is done in fine style, preserving as far as may be the spirit of the original. As a book of meditations the work would prove of great interest to students of comparative religion. It is a pity that few students outside of Punjab have thought of studying Sikhism. Hence Professor Teja Singh's works deserves wider publicity. The message of Guru Nanak would appeal to the best in Indian readers, and even in his original language should present no special difficulty. It is the message of India through all her millenia of history—to whichever province, to whichever age the messenger came—the message of the brotherhood of humanity and of salvation through service.

The second tract is readable but brief history of the faith. The work of each one of the ten Gurus is surveyed and special point is made of the conditions under which each worked and moulded the destinies of the faith. The author has touched the real point of Sikhism when he says that "the Sikh is essentially a disciple" and that "his religion, therefore, is best understood when we regard it as a life, a discipline, and not a history or philosophy." A remarkable history is here presented of the inward evolution of a great movement. In the new India of tomorrow the Sikh has a part to



play even greater than in the past—glorious as it has been—and it behooves all thinking non-Sikhs to-day to appreciate the true inwardness of this faith and to consider what treasures it has to bring to the common stock of India's future greatness.—*The Calcutta Reviews*.

*Japji*.—This is a translation of the Sikh morning prayer. The rendering is as liberal as is consistent with maintaining the true spirit of the poem, the style of the original being so elliptical and the thought so deep that a too literal translation would have been defective. The writer has attempted to supply a connecting link of thought between the apparently disconnected passages of the original. The copious notes at the end help to elucidate the difficult points and explain some of the fundamental principles of Sikh thought.

*The Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*, by the same author, is a kind of introduction to Sikh history. The writer tries in it to trace the evolution of the Khalsa in the hands of the ten successive Gurus. It shows the futility of taking the events of Sikh history incoherently and making invidious distinctions about the conduct of different Gurus. Here history is presented in its true light as the crystallization of a nation's spirit to be realized as a unity. It is a handy outline of the main currents of Sikh history and will prove useful not only to the general public but also to History students in the Punjab and Calcutta Universities who have got Sikh history as a part of their course.—*The Tribune*.

*The Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*.—This is an exceedingly useful brochure on what may be called the moral history of the Sikhs.—*Journal of Indian History, Allahabad*.

*Guru Nanak's Meditations*.—Mr. Teja Singh, Professor of the Khalsa College of Amritsar, has done a great service to the English-reading non-Punjabi public by initiating it into the teachings of Guru Nanak.—*The Mahratta*.

"It is by far the best exposition of the Japji that I have seen and I hope it will have a wide circulation."—*Rev. E. Guilford, Tarn Taran*.

The English rendering of these books is faithful and quite intelligible to an ordinary layman. Written in easy English the books very clearly put forth the spirit of the Sikh religion before the English-knowing people.—*The Punjab Text-Book Committee*.





